

Rivers and Streams

For more information this project please contact:

Greg Gelwicks
Manchester Fish Hatchery
22693 205th Ave.
Manchester, IA 52057
(563) 927-3276
Gregory.Gelwicks@dnr.iowa.gov



Flathead Catfish Population Assessment in Iowa's Rivers

Surveys show that nearly half of angler effort in Iowa is focused on rivers and streams, and more time is spent fishing for catfish than any other type of fish. In recent years there has been a perceived decline in flathead catfish populations in some Iowa rivers, particularly in the number of large fish available to anglers. Some anglers believe that more restrictive bag limits, further restrictions on methods of taking flathead catfish, and modifications of commercial harvest regulations are needed to improve flathead catfish abundance and size structure. Fisheries biologists in Iowa do not feel they know enough about flathead catfish populations, and the factors impacting these populations, to determine whether regulations can produce or enhance trophy catfish fisheries.

A statewide study was launched in 2003 to develop recommendations for managing flathead catfish populations in Iowa's rivers. While there have been investigations of flathead catfish in the Des Moines, Skunk, and Mississippi Rivers in the past, this study is the first coordinated, statewide effort to monitor and assess the well being of flathead catfish populations. The study is collecting current information on population status in Pool 13 of the Mississippi River and 11 sites on the Cedar, Iowa, North Raccoon, and Des Moines Rivers. Data has been collected on age structure, growth rates, length frequency, and relative abundance of flathead catfish populations in these rivers. Since the start of the current study, over 13,000 flathead catfish ranging in length from 2 to 48 inches have been sampled. Additional data collection and

analysis will provide much needed information on the health of flathead catfish populations in Iowa's rivers. The study is also determining the most efficient methods for collecting information on flathead catfish populations in Iowa's rivers. This will allow better monitoring of populations, and the impacts of management actions on flathead catfish in Iowa.

